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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General deplores recent developments in southern Lebanon and calls on Israel to withdraw its forces immediately.

- Vasiliy Safronchuk, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs, to go on second visit to Libya, tomorrow, with message from Secretary-General.

- Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia briefs correspondents on plan to deploy United Nations Transitional Authority in that country.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed "grave concern" about recent developments in southern Lebanon, following an incursion by the Israeli Defence Force assisted by de facto forces, into the area where the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is deployed. Two UNIFIL soldiers from Fiji were seriously wounded in the crossfire resulting from the hostilities between these forces and armed elements in the area trying to oppose them.

The Secretary-General said in a statement through his Spokesman today that he viewed the developments with "grave concern" and called on Israel to withdraw its forces immediately. He recalled that only yesterday, the members of the Security Council had reaffirmed "their commitment to the full sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries, as set out in resolution 425 (1978).

Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding had been in contact with the Permanent Representative of Lebanon and had called in the Permanent Representative of Israel to protest, on behalf of the Secretary-General, the Israeli incursion into the UNIFIL area and to demand that the Israeli and de facto forces be immediately withdrawn.

(more)

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In a separate development, the Spokesman told correspondents that the Security Council was holding consultations this afternoon concerning the Secretary-General's latest report on Yugoslavia. He said there was a possibility that the Council would convene in a formal meeting tomorrow.

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The Secretary-General has decided to send Vasiliy Safronchuk, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs on a second visit to Libya, tomorrow.

Mr. Safronchuk will arrive in Tripoli on Saturday, 22 February where he is tentatively scheduled to meet with Colonel Muammar Al-Qathafi on Sunday.

He will be carrying a second message from the Secretary-General to the Libyan leadership seeking further clarification on Libya's position regarding the implementation of Security Council resolution 731 (1992) which requested the cooperation of Libyan authorities in establishing responsibility for the terrorist acts that resulted in the destruction of Pan Am 103 and UTA flight 772.

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The total budget for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAG) is expected to come to just under $2 billion, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, told correspondents at Headquarters today. It would be the largest operation undertaken by the United Nations in the past three decades, he said, but the deployment of its various components had been planned with careful consideration to the Organization's serious financial situation.

The $200 million approved by the General Assembly for the initial phase of UNTAG would become available as soon as the Security Council adopts the Secretary-General's plan for the operation's implementation, which, should occur, he said, before the end of next week.

The UNTAG's mandate, as delineated by the Paris Accords signed in October last year, was very ambitious, he said, adding: "It is not our choice to do it; we are duty-bound to do it." Yet, despite all the odds against its success -- diplomatic, political and physical, because of the destruction of the country's infrastructure -- he was optimistic that UNTAG would be deployed in time to carry out the necessary preparations for elections in late April or early May of 1993.

Mr. Akashi also indicated that doubts had been expressed about whether UNTAG could carry out its work in time, with the onset of the rainy season in May which could seriously impede its activity. It had been recommended postponing the elections until the spring of 1994, but the Secretary-General was urging that everything possible be done to adhere to the existing timetable.

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